



Welcome to Middlebury!

On November 1, 1800, the charter for Middlebury College was granted. For eighty-three years, Middlebury was an all-male institution, attracting students from Vermont and the New England area. Soon after they were accepted, women received recognition for their outstanding academic work. Middlebury women, as students and as faculty, have had a significant impact on the school and community. This brochure will guide you through the history of women at Middlebury College and will lead you to a few historically important buildings on campus. Enjoy your stay!

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A History of Women at **Middlebury College**



**A chronological walking tour
of the history of women at
Middlebury College ...**

1. Emma Willard House



Emma Hart Willard (1787–1870), writer, teacher, and educator, was born in Berlin, Connecticut. She moved to Vermont in 1807 and, after teaching for a period of time, married Dr. John Willard in 1809. Financial misfortune encouraged Emma to resume her teaching and she opened the *Middlebury Female Seminary* in 1814 in her home where her rigorous academic program encouraged young women to master classical and scientific subjects. Although Emma sought admission to Middlebury College, her status as a female precluded her from attending. Undaunted she went on to found the *Troy Female Seminary*, later named the *Emma Willard School* and is credited with founding the first permanent female seminary in America. It is both fitting and ironic that her home, location of the first women's seminary, is now home to the admissions and financial aid offices of Middlebury College where women students are now the majority of students.

2. Middlebury Admits Women (1883)

In the spring of 1882, May Anna Bolton, a young woman from the town of Middlebury, applied to the College. At the time, women had limited opportunities to further their education.

As in the past, trustees turned Bolton down but were forced to reconsider her application when Middlebury faced financial pressures due to low enrollment. At the urging of alumni and townspeople, the trustees relented and the first women students, *May Anna Bolton*, *May Belle Chellis*, and *Louise Hagar Edgerton*, were enrolled at the College in 1884. Women had no difficulty adjusting to the academic rigor of the college. May Belle Chellis, '86, finished first in her class and won the coveted Greek Prize.



May Belle Chellis, 1886



3. First African American Female Graduate of Middlebury, 1889 *Mary Annette Anderson, 1889*

In 1889 Mary Annette Anderson became the first female African American student to graduate from Middlebury College. Finishing first in her class, she served as class valedictorian and is thought to be the first African American woman elected to Phi Beta Kappa in the US. She went on to teach at Howard University in Washington DC. Today, the "African American Alliance" and "Women of Color" are both thriving clubs on campus.

4. Negotiating Co-education *Middlebury College Faculty, 1887*

At first, Middlebury College did very little to foster a co-educational



environment. At the time that women were admitted as students and for twenty-six years thereafter, there were no women on the faculty. Speaking of President Hamlin, Chellis said, "he was always kind and fair, but I had a feeling that he did not really care to have us there."

5. A Room of Their Own



For many years women had no space to study or socialize in between classes and library hours were strictly regulated. The only reading room for female students was a bare room on the top floor of Old Chapel. The room became known as "The Brown Study" and the women who studied there the "Brown Study Club."

6. Battell Hall (1891)

When female students were first admitted, there was no place for them to live on campus. Most female students lived with families in town. The College claimed that it was unable to afford housing for women until 1891 when Battell Hall, located on the corner of Weybridge and College Streets, became a home for Middlebury's female students.



Battell Hall

7. The Silenced Majority

As women entered the College in increasing numbers and won a number of top awards, the College began to pass a number of rules limiting women within the institution. In 1896, the College established a policy requiring that the highest ranking male student should be the valedictorian and the highest ranking female student, even if she had higher grades than the male student, should be the salutatorian.

In 1901 women were the majority of the incoming class. In 1902 anxious trustees encouraged the Vermont legislature to pass a law segregating the school by gender. Act No. 251 passed in 1902, authorized the "President and Fellows of Middlebury College to establish an institution for the higher education of women." Although financial constraints prevented many presidents from going forward with the plan for separate facilities for a Woman's College, the building of Pearson's Hall in 1921 and the expansion of what is today called the Adirondack house marked the beginning of the physical segregation of female students.



Adirondack House 1911



8. First Female Faculty Member: Rhoda Mabel White

In 1909, when women outnumbered male students on campus, Middlebury College hired its first female faculty member to serve as Dean of Women. Although women were the majority of students, the number of women faculty did not begin to increase until the 1920s.



9. McCullough Student Center: Women's Athletic Association

Although now used as a social space, McCullough Student Center was once the school gymnasium. In 1912, the Women's Athletic Association was founded. Women were allowed to play interclass basketball, however only female students, faculty wives, and friends could attend these games.



called a non-traditional field.

10. Women Faculty Entering

'Non-Traditional' Fields

Ellen Elizabeth Wiley
By 1922, women constituted 19 percent of the faculty at Middlebury. Most of these women taught in home economics, physical education, and the language program. **Ellen Elizabeth Wiley**, hired in 1925 as Instructor of Mathematics, became the first woman to teach in what has subsequently been called a non-traditional field.

11. A "Proper Education"



In the 1920s a "proper education" for women included home economics. As the student newspaper, the *Katadloscope*, reported, "A woman's education is not complete without at least one course in home economics... be it learning to make fluffy muffins or scramble eggs...."

12. First Female Full Professor, 1929

Viewed as an appropriate sphere for women, Home Economics offered a home for women faculty as well as women students. **Clara Blanche Knapp**, became the first female full professor of Home Economics in 1929 and other promotions soon followed including **Ellen Elizabeth Wiley**, Associate Professor of Mathematics, and **Marion Luella Young**, Associate Professor of Physical Education.

13. Stalled Progress: President Moody Sets Masculine Mood

The 1930s was not as promising as the previous decade for Middlebury women. President Paul Moody (1921-1943) was a staunch supporter of sex-segregated education, finally creating a separate "Women's College" in 1931.

Moody, known for his unsympathetic views of women faculty in particular, happily reported that "We have practically eliminated women from the faculty except in those departments like home economics and physical education for women."

As the following quote reveals, his views on women faculty were quite harsh:

"The average woman teacher is a greater problem than three average men teachers. They can be secured for less money, but that is not a distinct advantage."

— President Paul Moody, 1930

This unsympathetic view of women was perhaps less problematic in 1921 when he was appointed President and the size of the student body was the largest in the College history. In 1942, when the size of the student body had fallen, a secret meeting of the trustees called for Moody's dismissal. He resigned shortly thereafter.

14. The Mountain Club

Perhaps part of women's growing confidence in nature was to be found in culture. If male and female students were separated on campus in the 1930s, they nonetheless joined forces to form "The Mountain Club" to take advantage of the opportunities afforded by the mountain campus. A distinct feature of the Middlebury campus continues to be the variety of outdoor activities available to students in both winter and summer.



15. The Feminine Mystique:

Academic success, 1950s and 1960s

Despite Moody's efforts to keep the college segregated, Middlebury women continued to excel in the classroom. In 1954 the *Harvard Crimson* noted that at Middlebury there were far more women students found on the Dean's List than men: "out of 503 girls and 693 boys there were 163 women versus 58 men occupying the Dean's list. This is a practically three to one ratio, and in a small community it has powerful effects."

16. "Old Boy's School?"

In the 1960s, female students fought for their fair roles in the social life on campus. In 1966, when the National Institute on Mental Health called Middlebury "A masculine college run primarily by men with women in the background," policies still limited women students. Women students were successful in removing the 11:00 p.m. curfew and policies preventing women from entering men's dormitories were also removed.

17. Title IX: Kenyon Arena, Pepin Gym, and Nelson Recreation Center

With the passage of Title IX, Middlebury College women, who had always been athletic, were finally given the opportunity to pursue more competitive athletics. Field hockey, swimming, lacrosse, and tennis were among the first athletic teams. Female athletes at Middlebury saw success both in school and on the fields.

18. Co-Education: Joining Forces

Influenced by the feminist movement of the 1960s, Middlebury women began to see more gender equality and recognition on campus. **President James I. Armstrong** (1963-75) made significant strides towards equality dismantling separate aspects of the Women's College. No longer were there separate deans, admissions offices, and physical education departments and most dorms went closed from 1970-75.



19. Second female full professor, 1976:

Marjorie Lamberti, Professor of History

In 1976 Marjorie Lamberti was promoted to full professor—only the second female faculty member to have achieved this status in the history of the college. It had been 51 years since the first female faculty member reached the rank of full professor.

Respected both in the classroom and by her colleagues, Lamberti was well aware of the difficulties that women encounter in pursuing their careers. Speaking on women in positions of power, Lamberti said, "When women enter very responsible positions in the power structure, it is really a mark that they have arrived...I admire women who hold these positions and break the glass ceiling." Shortly after her appointment the number of women faculty began to increase over the next decade decreasing from 22 in 1976 to 67 by 1987.

20. Women and Gender Studies, 1991

In 1991 Middlebury alumna, **Drue Gensler '57**, offered to pledge \$20,000 for a Women's Center, if the rest could be raised from additional sources. The same year the College offered a Women's Studies major and concentration. Initially, the administration did very little to support the project. An editorial in the student newspaper, the money was raised.

"Some people argue that...groups interested in gender issues deserve no special treatment. Nothing could be farther from the truth; for gender issues are not special interests, they are universal interests."

— The Middlebury Campus

21. 1993 Chellis House Opens

In 1993, over a century after female students requested a study center, **May Belle Chellis Women's Resource Center** opened as a space for meetings, women's studies classes, and library and is home to many organizations dedicated to issues of women and gender.



22. Middlebury College Today!

Today, Middlebury College welcomes a diverse student body from throughout the world. In so many ways, Middlebury College is a far different campus than it was in 1800 when it was chartered and in 1883 when the first woman student was enrolled. From the beginning, women students have excelled in their academic challenges and contributed much to making Middlebury College an engaging and exciting environment.